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Flurry of U.S. Schemes to Destroy Castro in '60s

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Washington

America's military leaders signed off on a plan in 1963 to provoke Fidel Castro into attacking the United States so that retaliating U.S. forces could squash him "with speed, force and determination," newly declassified records show.

The records were among 600 pages opened at the National Archives by a government agency, the Assassination Records Review Board, to help researchers into John Kennedy's assassination in 1963 explore the possibility of a Cuban connection.

Some Cuban involvement has been theorized because of slain suspect Lee Harvey Oswald's association with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

"These military records further demonstrate how high on the U.S. government's radar screen getting rid of the Castro government was in the early 1960s," said John Tunheim, a federal judge in Minnesota and the review board's chairman.

The documents showed that in February 1962, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Deputy Defense Secretary Roswell Gilpatric approved a plan to "lure or provoke Castro, or an uncontrollable subordinate, into an overt hostile reaction against the United States."

The attack "would in turn create the justification for the U.S. to not only retaliate but destroy Castro with speed, force and determination," the memo said.

But by the following year, another Pentagon policy paper discussed a new scheme to make it appear that Cuba had attacked a member of the Organization of American States so that the United States could retaliate.

In all, five scenarios were spelled out, foreseeing either real or faked Cuban attacks on a U.S. ally. There is no record that any ever went beyond the drawing board.

The planners got cold feet, the documents show. They feared that news of their schemes would eventually leak.

"Any of the contrived situations described above are inherently, extremely risky in our democratic system in which security can be maintained, after the fact, with very great difficulty," a memo said.

The documents were the second set about Washington's preoccupation with getting rid of Castro to be made public by the board. Late last year, 1,500 pages showed that military planners had come up with a variety of dirty tricks intended to harass or humiliate Castro.